

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council**  
**Final Minutes – August 15, 2000**

**Members Present**

Rob Bleser	Warren Johnson (p.m.)
Wayne Blevins	Don Kincaid
John Brownlee	Karen Lee
Virginia Cronk	Ken Nedimyer
Fran Decker	George Neugent
Jim Fryer	Anita Schwessinger
David Hawtof	Deborah Shaw
Tony Iarocci	

**Alternates Present**

Todd Firm for Rob Bleser (p.m.)  
Greg DiDomenico  
Jim Hurley for Tom Davidson  
Jerry Lorenz  
Martin Moe  
Sheila Mullins  
Diane Silvia for Duncan Mathewson

**Call to Order/Approval of Minutes/Approval of Agenda**

The meeting was called to order at 9:14 a.m. On motion by Chairman Neugent and seconded by Jim Hurley, the minutes of the June 20, 2000 meeting were approved. The agenda for today's meeting was approved as presented.

**Sanctuary Superintendent's Report – Billy Causey** presented the attached report.

**Public Comment**

**Frank Hawkins** presented "Sponging in the Florida Keys—Continuing State Authorized Damage to our Threatened Marine Ecosystem", and read the Resolution of the Islamorada Fishing Club (copies attached).

Mr. Causey reviewed the background leading to the decision to have a panel to discuss sponging at the October Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting.

Discussion was held regarding economic impact, the need for the science to be updated, and the sponge recruitment issue. Karen Lee asked if the SAC could make a recommendation to Sanctuary management to ask them to make a recommendation to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. Mr. Causey replied affirmatively. Anna Marie Hartman clarified the resolution that was adopted by the Governor and Cabinet, and reviewed the process for adopting State fisheries regulations. Don Kincaid asked about the Don Sweat and John Stevely report on sponging. John Hunt reported that they are under contract with FWC evaluating the sponge die-off related to the algal bloom of Florida Bay (a copy of their Sea Grant project paper is attached). John Brownlee and Mr. Causey talked about sponging being more a habitat issue than a fisheries issue, which is why the SAC is an excellent forum to make recommendations on this issue. Ken Nedimyer expressed his concerns relating to sponging being a social issue; it is a traditional fishery and he questioned the statistics presented. David Hawtof and Sheila Mullins expressed their concerns relating to the selling of shells and sponges in Keys gift shops which sends a mixed message to visitors. Debra Shaw and Chairman Neugent made comments regarding the importance of looking at the best scientific data available, and if it is determined sponging is in any way detrimental to water quality, the SAC has an obligation to act.

Mr. Causey asked for volunteers to help put together the panel. The following people signed up to be on the Sponging Working Group: John Brownlee, Billy Causey, Greg DiDomenico, David Hawtof, John Hunt, Tony Iarocci, Warren Johnson, Don Kincaid, Martin Moe, Ken Nedimyer, Deborah Shaw.

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report – Anna Marie Hartman** reported on the following items:

- Annual Report to the Governor and Cabinet
- Coral Reef Task Force
- Placement of fiber optic cables
- Natural resource damage assessment workshops in St. Petersburg
- Lobster trap clean up process and progress

Mr. Iarocci thanked the State of Florida, John Hunt and the FWC, and the staff who worked within the State for their work during the lobster trap clean up, particularly Kay Lynn.

Ms. Hartman mentioned the fifth year review of the Management Plan. Mr. Causey reported that a timeline for doing the fifth year review will be distributed at the next Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting.

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Report – Mr. John Hunt** reported that Dr. Russell Nelson, Division Director, has resigned. The temporary Division Director is Ken Haddad of the Florida Marine Research Institute. He also mentioned that a color copy of the Florida Sea Grant sponge report is available.

Discussion was held regarding the importance of a strong advocacy for Tortugas 2000 in light of Dr. Nelson's departure, and enforcement concerns.

Discussion was also held regarding the large areas of lost sea grass due to the recent sea urchin bloom. Mr. Hunt reported on a small grant recently awarded to FWC by NOS to evaluate this problem. He also reported that this event would not be considered a natural resource disaster, and indicated it may be resolved through the natural processes of mortality, but the recovery of the sea grasses would be expected to be very slow.

### **Sanctuary Enforcement Reports**

**FWC/FMP -Lt. Bob Currul** reviewed the statistics for the past fiscal year contained in the report to the Governor and Cabinet. He pointed out that there were 100 more groundings in the last six months (January through July) than for the same period last year. Lt. Currul also reported on enforcement during the two day recreational lobster season.

The Council members discussed their concerns and observations regarding groundings by uneducated boaters visiting the Keys, and lobster poaching in Sanctuary Preservation Areas.

**National Marine Fisheries Service – John Barylsky**, Special Agent with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, distributed their quarterly report, and reported on his agency's assistance to the FWC during the lobster mini-season.

## **Unfinished Business**

Passenger Disembarkation Fee - Chairman Neugent tabled discussion on this issue pending further research.

## **Working Group Reports**

**Personal Watercraft – Dave Savage** presented the attached report. LCDR Savage also presented samples of the idle speed only “no wake” buoys.

Discussion was held regarding the State legislation which says that local entities cannot discriminate against personal watercraft, relating to problems with personal watercraft need to be solved according to state and federal law. Mr. Causey made comments indicating that the FKNMS and SAC needs to continue working through a process and work in the right venues, and that philosophical questions regarding personal watercraft will not be addressed by this body, or by FKNMS regulations. Also discussed were other areas in the country where personal watercraft are banned; the different points of view anticipated to be brought up at the public forums; and the percentage of personal watercraft in the State of Florida. Further discussion was held regarding the background leading to the language focusing on personal watercraft in the Final Management Plan; licensing and education; and whether they should be banned or regulated through zoning and monitoring.

Chairman Neugent recognized Ms. Ianotta in the audience, aide to Representative Deutsch.

## **New Business**

**Review of Issues Brought before the Sanctuary Advisory Council – Billy Causey** facilitated a prioritization of issues to be discussed by the SAC. The SAC alternates present joined the council members in the selection of the issues.

Chairman Neugent left the meeting at 12:10 p.m. Vice Chairman Warren Johnson chaired the afternoon session of the meeting.

**Prioritization/Ranking of issues raised by the Sanctuary Advisory Council** – The list is attached.

### **Working Group Reports – continued**

**Channel Marking** – **Warren Johnson** read the attached statement for the record.

**Education** – **Virginia Cronk** reported on the upcoming Sustainable Seas Expedition and the National Ocean Science winners.

### **Unfinished Business**

**Mini Lobster Season** – **Sheila Mullins** requested a panel report on the two day recreational lobster season at a future Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting. Mr. Causey stated that a panel session could be scheduled to present this issue at an upcoming meeting.

### **New Business - Continued**

**Tony Iarocci** reported on the South Atlantic Council Marine Reserve meeting in Charleston, SC and distributed a copy of information regarding concrete artificial reefs. Mr. Iarocci stated he thinks it is something that should be considered in the Keys, because of loss of habitat. Discussion was held regarding similar projects in the Keys. Mr. Causey reported on the extensive criteria which goes into the placement of artificial reefs. Ms. Mullins expressed her concerns relating to creating a different habitat rather than restoring and making a lost habitat livable again.

Mr. Causey also reported that the National Marine Sanctuary Program is developing national policies for all National Marine Sanctuaries on some major issues, and the

number one issue is artificial reefs. Mr. Causey would like Mr. Iarocci, and any other SAC members interested in the artificial reef issue, to participate in some way in the national policy development on artificial reefs.

Vice Chairman Johnson stated that the artificial reef issue should be placed on the October SAC agenda.

## **Public Comment**

**Brian Weinstein** commented that he heard during the report on the PWC educational forums that a lot of people didn't show up because they knew it all, and they had no benefit in going, and there was nothing to learn. Mr. Weinstein said he thought he was one of those people who knew it all, but he went and he learned a lot from the opposing side that he didn't know. Mr. Weinstein suggested and recommended that whenever we hear about these educational forums, we encourage people to go, even if they are extremists and think they know everything, because the fact is, they may just learn something they don't know. Mr. Weinstein said he learned a lot about the environmental impacts of PWCs that he was not aware of, and appreciated the meeting very much.

**Warren Johnson** – A copy of Mr. Johnson's presentation is attached.

## **Announcements**

Billy Causey announced that the Water Quality Steering Committee meeting will be held at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, August 22 at the Monroe County Government Center.

Mr. Causey showed an example of and announced that buoy banks will be placed in dive shops, through the Sanctuary Friends, to collect donations for the mooring buoy program.

Mr. Causey announced the places and times for the Annual Maritime Community meetings to be held this month throughout the Keys.

Mr. Causey also announced that coral spawning will occur within the next few days.

## **Items for October Agenda**

Panel on Sponging

Artificial Reefs (fish gardens)

Priorities/Ranking (spread sheet)

Timeline of 5 Year Review of Final Management Plan

### **Items for December Agenda**

Karen Lee moved that the Sanctuary staff put together an educational panel to present to the SAC at their December meeting on the topic of the two day lobster mini-season, the educational session to be presented by experts that have information about lobstering and the mini-season in general, so the SAC as a body can begin discussions of this issue. The motion was seconded, and upon vote, passed unanimously.

**The meeting was adjourned at 2:27 p.m.**